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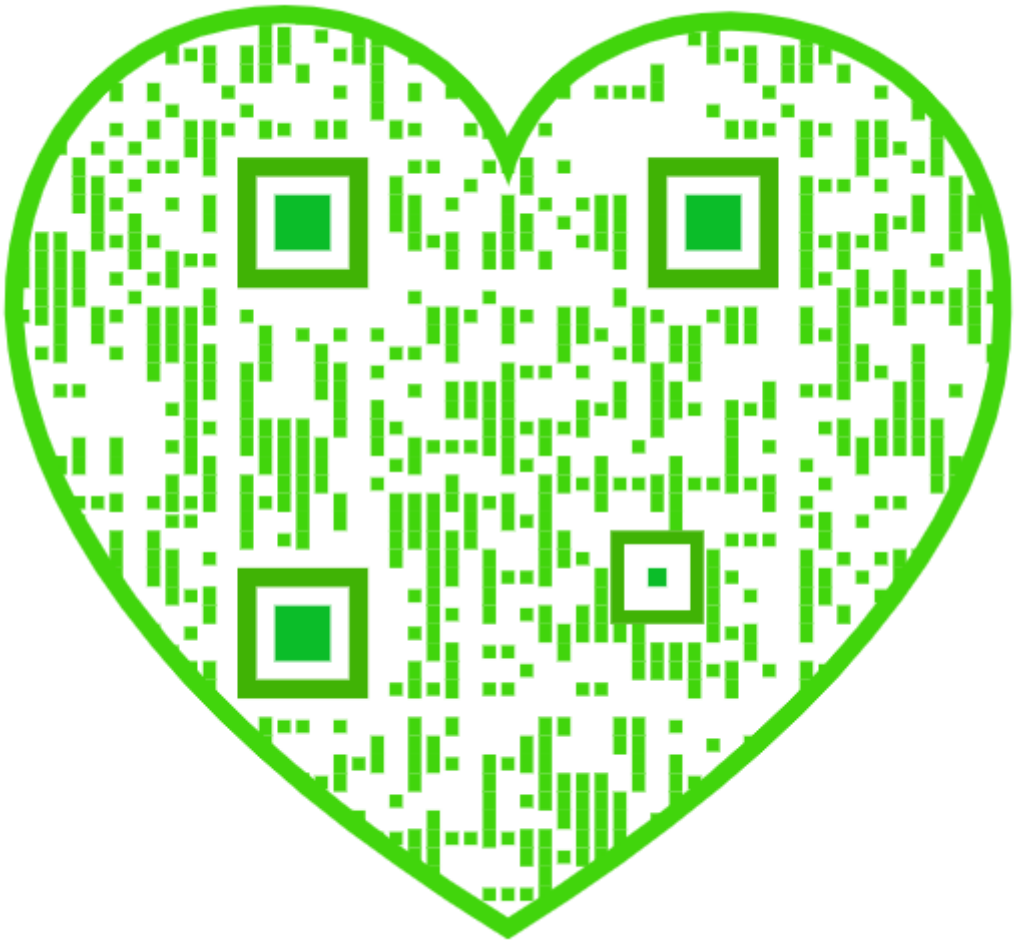
# THE SPIRIT OF THE PINE



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# THE SPIRIT OF THE PINE

BY

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# THE SPIRIT OF THE PINE.

## A Christmas Masque.

CHARACTERS.

THE SPIRIT OF THE PINE.
QUEEN OF NIGHT.
THE SPIRITS OF THE STARS.
ELVES AND GNOMES.
A BROTHER AND SISTER.

[*The curtain rising, discloses, in a star-lit woodland clearing, a young pine-tree. Snow covers the ground. Enter a little brother and sister poorly clad. They carry sprigs of holly.*]

BROTHER. See, sister!

SISTER. What?

BROTHER. That beautiful little pine-tree! Think how it would look all lit up with candles!

SISTER. If we could only carry it home!

BROTHER. And cover it with gold apples and toys!

SISTER. And lighted candles!

BROTHER. And on the very tip, — what would you put on the very tip?

SISTER. Oh, a great gleaming star, like one of those up in the sky.

BROTHER. Does Christmas come only for rich people, sister?

SISTER. Why! have n't we a bit of Christmas in our hands this very minute?

BROTHER. This holly? Oh, but I should so like a beautiful loaded tree. I think I should n't mind being cold and hungry, if I only had a beautiful tree.

SISTER. (*Kneels.*) Kneel down here by me.

BROTHER. Are you going to pray, — out here in the snow?

SISTER. I want to show you something. Look at the little tree!

BROTHER. I 'm looking.

SISTER. See, now that we are so low, how it stands out against the sky; and it looks as if the stars were hanging on its branches.

BROTHER. Like candles on a lighted Christmas tree!

SISTER. And see that great shining star right over the top!

BROTHER. If we could only carry the tree home, stars and all!

SISTER. Come, it is growing cold.

BROTHER. (*Stretching out arms.*) Oh, you dear little tree!

SISTER Come, darling.

BROTHER. With the star above you! Oh, you dear little tree, — our home is so cold and bare, — come with us! Oh, bring your stars with you, and come!

SISTER. Mother will be looking for us.

BROTHER. (*Kissing pine.*) Good by, little tree, good by!

SISTER. Good by, little tree! [*Exeunt.*

[*Enter the Spirits of the Stars. They are clad in pale gold robes, and wear stars upon their foreheads.*]

THE SPIRITS OF THE STARS. Spirits of the stars are we,
That on joyous wing,
Bear to-night,
From Heaven's height,
Greetings from our King.
Flood we with our rapturous song,
All the spaces wide,
Chant on earth,
The wondrous birth
Of the Glorified.
Spirits of the stars are we,
That on joyous wing,
Bear to-night,
From Heaven's height,
Greeting from our King.

[*From amid the branches of the pine appears the Spirit of the Pine, clad in pale green, and garlanded.*]

SPIRIT OF PINE. Hail, spirits of the stars

STARS. Soul of the pine,
All hail, the heavens greet thee; Spirit, hail!

SPIRIT OF PINE. Oh, spirits of the blessed stars,
O'er sleeping town and spire,
All night upon your golden cars
Ye ride, a shining choir;
All night in homage, as you go,
My yearning arms I lift.
When white the earth with winter's snow,
Or pink with rosy drift
Of spring-time blossoms, scattered wide,
And scenting dale and hill;
O'er Heaven's plain I watch you glide,
Serene, majestic, still.

FIRST STAR. Dear Spirit, gentle Spirit of the Pine,
Not so remote the starry ways of Heaven
But we have marked thee. Very dear to us
The incense of thy branches. Ere we go,
Ask on this blessed eve a Christmas boon,
And we will grant it to thee as of old.

SPIRIT OF PINE. Oh, spirits of the upper air,
Where here ye radiant stand,
There knelt but now in childish prayer
Two children, hand in hand;
Gleamed all about me as I stood,
The winter stars o'erhead.

"Ah, could we take thee from the wood,
Dear tree," the children said,
"Thee, and the pretty shining lights
That on thy branches glow!"
Oh, spirits of the azure heights,
I pray you, let me go!

FIRST STAR. Dear Spirit, if thou goest, thou must die.

SPIRIT OF PINE. What, die, and leave this lovely earth?

SECOND STAR. Alas!
Thus it is willed in the decrees of heaven!

[*Spirit of the Pine looks towards heaven, and lifts her hands. Gazes about lingeringly. Clasps the branches of the little tree.*]

SPIRIT OF PINE. Oh, branches dear, farewell!

STARS. What, thou wilt die!

SPIRIT OF PINE. Oh, timid rill,
That shrink'st away
From winter's chill;
Oh, birds of May,
Oh, slumbering flowers,

Whose iris train
Wild April's showers
Will wake again —
Sleep dulls your ears,
Sleep seals your eyes.
Ye have no tears
For her who dies.

STARS. Alas, and thou wilt go!

SPIRIT OF PINE. O elf! O fay!
O delving gnome! O rainbow-winged sprite!
That dance away
The moonlit hours of the shadowy night,
The scarlet bells that stud the sombre yew
Ring for my knell.
Dear Spirits — oh, beloved woodland crew —
Farewell!

[*Enter Elves and Gnomes. The Gnomes are clad in brown jerkins and carry axes.*]

FIRST GNOME. In the caverns of the ground,
Winter bound,
Dig we out the veinèd gold,
Tend the shoots, that from the cold
Shrink in fear.
Lo! you called us; we are here.

FIRST STAR. The spirit of the pine would hence. Be yours
The hand to speed your sister on her way.

ELVES AND GNOMES. Alas!

FIRST ELF. Do not leave us, little sister,
Little sister, do not leave us;
Grateful is the shade thou givest us,
Sweet the incense of thy branches;
Sweet the songs the winds of autumn
Harp upon thy swaying branches.

ELVES AND GNOMES. Little sister, little sister,
Do not leave us, little sister!

STARS. The steeds that to our cars we bind,
Impatient paw the frosty air,
Impatient neigh to join their kind.
Soul of the pine, prepare.

[*The Spirit of the Pine takes farewell of the Gnomes and Elves.*]

SPIRIT OF PINE. Swift, gentle elves, your task!

[*Gnomes take hold of the hem of her dress and implore her, with gestures, not to leave them. She shakes her head and points to the tree. They lift their axes. At the first stroke, the Spirit of the Pine trembles, then falls on her knees; the Stars gather about and support her. As the tree falls, her head sinks.*]

SPIRIT OF PINE. My tears forgive, and all my fond lamenting.
In peace I go — farewell!

ELVES AND GNOMES. Farewell!

SECOND ELF. Her face
Is shining even as your starry selves!

[*Elves and Gnomes gather about her.*]

ELVES AND GNOMES. She is gone, our little sister,
Gone forever is our sister,
Mute the music of her branches,
Bare the ground her fragrant shadows
Sheltered in the glare of summer;
She is gone, our little sister;
Peace be with thee, little sister!

[*Enter Queen of the Night in starry raiment. She wears a crescent on her brow, and carries a wand. All bow before her.*]

QUEEN OF NIGHT. Who, like a bruisèd flower, lieth here
Before my feet?

THIRD STAR. The Spirit of the Pine.

QUEEN. Who willed it thus?

SECOND STAR. Herself, that she might fill
The simple longing of a childish heart.

QUEEN OF NIGHT. Doth not the violet,
Adroop in heaven's fierce ray,
Lift, 'neath my wings of humid gray,
Revived, her eyes of blue, all dewy wet?
So thou, beneath my wing
Oh, creep, thou tender bruised bud. Arise,
Unseal thine eyes;
Join the bright choirs, and lift thy voice and sing.

[*The Queen takes a star from her robe, and binds it upon the forehead of the Spirit of the Pine. They throw a starry mantle about her.*

STARS, ELVES, AND GNOMES. Hail! hail! new-born star,
Soon in golden car
Shalt thou ride o'er heaven's plains,
Shalt thou guide the shining reins,
Afar, afar.
Hail, new-born star!

[*The curtain falls. Rising again it discovers a lighted tree, surrounded by the Queen of Night and the Spirits of the Stars. Among them, the Spirit of the Pine, now the Spirit of a Star, Elves and Gnomes. The brother and sister kneel in awe. The Spirits of the Stars hold them by the hand and point at the tree. Carol: "We Three Kings."*]

CAROL.

Once in fiery splendor clad,
Knelt before the shepherd lad,
Knelt to Joseph as their King,
Planets, marvelling.
Lord of angels, Lord of men!
Race of glory, now as then!
Ever sounding,
Still resounding,
Echoes wide the glad Amen.

Low, in starry majesty,
Bow the heavens at the knee
Of the meek-eyed Babe divine,
Last of Joseph's line.
Lord of angels, Lord of men!
Race of glory, now as then!
Ever sounding,
Still resounding,
Echoes wide the world's Amen.

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